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STATE DEPT FOR WHA/CCA

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SUBJECT: CUBAN MILITANTS PUMMEL INDEPENDENT LIBRARIANS

REF: HAVANA 21100

Classified By: COM Michael Parmly for Reason 1.4(d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Cuban communist militants brutally attacked two dissidents in Villa Clara province on October 10, the opening day of an extended "Congress" of independent librarians. The attack, which lasted more than an hour and involved forcibly transporting the dissidents from one city to another, left a man of 53 and his wife, 39, with black eyes, deep bruises and cuts. The man also suffered broken ribs; his wife had her trousers virtually ripped off. Eight days after the attack, the two dissidents met with Poloff, showed their clearly visible wounds and described the harrowing incident. They vowed to continue their peaceful opposition to the regime, and allowed the USG to disseminate their facial photos, taken following the attack. Unfortunately, theirs was not the only incident of repression marring the start of the four-and-a-half-month-long "Congress." End Summary.

¶2. (C) Orestes Suarez Torres, a welder whose dissident views cost him his job, and his wife, Nancy Gonzalez Garcia, a cigar roller, met with Poloff on October 18 and described a vicious October 10 attack that left them both bruised and battered. Suarez and Gonzalez, who operate an independent library (illegal, in the regime's eyes) in Ranchuelo, Villa Clara province, said all was well until they left the Santa Clara home of dissident Noelia Pedraza, where an independent-librarian "Congress" event had attracted 11 dissidents. A large crowd of communist militants stood outside Pedraza's apartment building and staged an "act of repudiation." When the dissidents left the building, they were allowed to walk toward a bus stop. But en route, around 12 militants grabbed Suarez and Gonzalez and forced them into two cars. Inside one, three female militants yanked on Gonzalez's long hair and rained blows on her face, chest and legs. Her trousers had been all but ripped off her body in the process of forcing her into the vehicle. Inside the other car, five male militants took turns pounding Suarez. (Note: The victims told us they recognized one of the attackers: Yordanis Junco, a judo instructor at the National Sports Institute in Santa Clara. We have added the name to USINT's list of "esbirros" -- henchmen -- implicated in human rights violations, and encourage Washington addresses to do the same. End Note.)

¶3. (C) The militants then drove the victims toward Ranchuelo, some 50 minutes away. Stopping en route beside a stream, the attackers splashed water on the dissidents, removing some of the blood that had discolored their clothing. Upon arriving in Ranchuelo, Suarez said, the militants parked their cars in front of the Communist Party headquarters, where First Secretary Wilfredo Hernandez Perez and State Security Major

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Jorge Luis Ojito looked on. Suarez, whose upper right arm sports a large tattoo of Lady Liberty, said Maj. Ojito informed the victims that they were restricted to the city of Ranchuelo for one week. Finally, the couple was driven home - only to find a crowd of some 80 people outside their home, staging an act of repudiation and yelling "Viva Fidel." "All Party militants," explained Gonzalez. After confiscating the victims' notebook, shoes and lighter, the militants let the dissidents enter their home.

COMMENT

14. (C) Even by the abysmal human rights standards of Villa Clara province - where in the city of Manicaragua, most facilities and services are off-limits to dissidents -- the October 10 attack was egregious. However, other ugly incidents tainted the start of the "Congress," organized by Martha Beatriz Roque's Assembly to Promote Civil Society. In Havana, dissident and independent librarian Felix Bonne Carcassas was subjected to an act of repudiation, while in the Granma city of Bayamo, a State Security officer threatened to organize an act of repudiation against independent librarian Luis Daniel Silva, according to the Assembly. We attribute the regime's aggressiveness in these cases to a desire to set an example in response to the most coordinated dissident activity since Fidel Castro's July 31 incapacitation.

15. (C) The married Ranchuelo couple have allowed us to disseminate their facial photos, taken after the attack. We have transmitted the photos to WHA/CCA and are considering options for use on the island.
PARMLY